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ABSTRACT

A study attempted to identify vision development and leadership characteristics of elementary school administrators in Ankara, Turkey. School administrators were asked to supply information about the following: (1) five characteristics that they like and dislike in their schools; (2) the internal and external obstacles affecting the operation of the schools; (3) the climate of the schools; and (4) characteristics of their ideal schools. Results indicated that school administrators perceived their schools similarly. The administrators depicted their ideal schools with the following characteristics: a school with a trained managerial team, local management, absence of political pressure, a quality education with a contemporary curriculum, the solution of economic and infrastructural problems, the management of discipline, and parents who are interested in the school and participate in school activities. (Contains 10 references.) (DFR)

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ORGANIZATIONAL VISIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATORS IN TURKISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE 21st. CENTURY

Abstract

S. Sule Ercetin

The study is third consecutive study of researcher aiming to identify vision development and leadership characteristics of the elementary school administrators. The findings of the study are valid for the schools placed in the metropolitan city of Ankara in Turkey. The school administrators were asked to state a) five characteristics that they like in their schools and five characteristics that they dislike in their schools, b) the internal and external obstacles affecting the operation of the schools, c) the climate of the schools and d) the schools in their ideals. It was seen that the school administrators perceive their schools similarly. The administrators depicted their ideal schools with the following characteristics, the schools with the trained managerial team, being managed locally, with no political pressure, providing quality education with contemporary curriculum, having already solved economic and infra-structural problems, discipline, parents with interest in school and participating school activities.

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ORGANIZATIONAL VISIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATORS IN TURKISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE 21st. CENTURY

I. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of a new century, the leaders of prominent organizations are plain and clear enough to meet the complexity, ready and elastic enough to catch dynamism and time, creative and sharing enough to turn variety into richness and determiner of the ambiguities. Therefore, having vision is one of the most important characteristics of leader school administrators. However, in Turkey the is an inadequacy of information about the proficiency levels of present school administrators in vision development. The writer, related to this problem of educational administration, has conducted two survey type researches which followed the result of one another.

The first study was conducted to identify the attitudes of the primary school administrators on '' vision development''[1]. According to the results of the study conducted on 158 principals and 243 assistant principals working at the elementary schools of the metropolitan city of Ankara: 1) the attitudes of the elementary school principals and assistant principals on vision development are '' affirmative '', 2) status, sex and experience are not the variables of vision development.

Depending on the findings of the above-mentioned study, the school administrators appear to have potential in vision development and can reveal leadership characteristics to develop vision in case of having external and internal support.

In overcoming the present problems of the educational administration, the necessity of the school administrators with vision is emphasized and it is claimed that the affirmative attitudes of present school administrators of the Ministry of Education in this respect can be developed and they can be utilized to eliminate the above-mentioned problems.

The second study is related to stage of ''personal vision development'' of the vision development process. This study dealt with the self-assessments of school principals and assistant principals on their proficiencies, self development fields, leadership styles, values and their assessments on their occupation and school. The most important three findings of this study are: 1) the school principals and their assistants seem to be two different groups in determining their proficiencies, self-development fields and leadership styles, 2) they have complaints about the school climate, school-environment relations and pressure of superior administrators, and 3) they perceive discipline as a value.

Depending on the findings of the study, the judgment reached was that the vision development potentials of the school administrators were significant enough among their present leadership characteristics, and ''organizational vision development'' stage was recommended to be studied in the same population. Depending on the above-recommendation, in this study the second stage of two consecutive stages of the vision development was focused on and the question of ''What are the organizational visions of the elementary school administrators?'' were surveyed in the same population.

1. METHODOLOGY

2. 1. Sample

The study was designed in the survey model. The population of the study consisted of 282 principals and 1088 assistant principals employed in elementary schools located in the borders of metropolitan city of Ankara in Turkey[2] All of the principals were tried to be reached and for the assistant principals, the sample range tables were used in selecting the samples [3]. In the sample range tables, 277 of 1088 assistant principals were selected to be samples in 0.95 reliability level and .05 significance level. 158 of 282 principals and 243 of 277 assistant principals were reached .

1.2. Instrument

A questionnaire developed by Edward W. Chance was administered by adopting into Turkish [4]. Six open-ended questions defining

organizational vision development process took place in the questionnaire. The schools administrators were asked to respond the first, the second and the sixth questions with 5 items, the third and the fourth questions with 3 items and the fifth question with one item. Six questions forming the questionnaire are as follows:

1.What are the most important five characteristics of your school that you like?

2.What are the most important five characteristics of your school that you do not like?

3.What are the most important three internal obstacles that prevent your school from operating successfully?

4. What are the most important three external obstacles that prevent your school from operating successfully?

5.How do you describe the climate of your school?

6.What are the most important five characteristics describing your ideal school?

2.3. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, we considered that all of 158 principals and of all 243 assistant principals would give the maximum responses for every item. The total number of the questions was considered and this number was multiplied with the probable number of the responses. For example, for items 1 and 2 the expected total number of the responses would be 158x 5 = 790 and 243 x 5 = 1215. Similar responses were grouped and frequencies were computed. The rates of the items were put into order from high to low. The same process was applied for items 3,5,6 and 7.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Characteristics That Elementary School Administrators Like in Their Schools

The elementary school principals stated different characteristics that they liked. The characteristics were listed according to the percentages, and ''the most important five characteristics'' that the school administrators like were given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Characteristics That Elementary School Administrators Like in Their Schools

Principals (N= 158)			Ass. Prin. (N= 243)		
158x5=790			243x5=1215		
The Characteristics	f	%	The Characteristics	f	%
Discipline	144	18.22	Discipline	311	25.59
Positive Characteristics of the students	108	13.67	Positive Characteristics of the students	224	18.44
Status of the School	98	12.41	Status of the school	104	9.63
Proficiency of The teachers	88	11.14	Economic Situation of the school	117	8.56
Economic Situation of The school	58	7.34	Educational technology	92	7.57

The findings related to the most important five characteristics of their schools that the elementary school administrators like can be summarized as follows:

1.62.78 % of the school principals and 69.78 % of the assistant principals, approximately two-third of them, focused on the first five characteristics within their own groups.

2.The school principals and the assistant principals seem to be two similar groups in identifying the characteristics that they like.

The findings reveal that school administrators perceive the important characteristics in their schools similarly. Among these characteristics the findings on ''discipline'' show similarity with the findings of the formerly mentioned study which dealt with personal vision development of the school administrators. In the above-mentioned study, it was identified that the school administrators perceived the discipline as value. It is understood that the school administrators create An atmosphere in their schools consistent with the values they like.

The thoughts of both groups on students, status and economic conditions of their schools are positive. Its reason may be the population of the study. It attracts the attention that the administrators did not place the quality of the education the performance of the students and the staff etc. in the most important five characteristics of their schools that they liked.

2.2. The Characteristics That Elementary School Administrators Do Not Like in Their Schools

The most important five undesired characteristics by the school administrators were put into order and given in Table 2.

Table 2. The Characteristics That Elementary School Administrators do not Like in Their Schools

Principals (N= 158)			Ass. Prin. (N= 243)		
158x5=790			243x5=1215		
The Characteristics	F	%	The Characteristics	f	%
School climate	115	14.55	School climate	158	13.00
Quality of the education	61	7.72	School-Environment Relations	89	7.00
School-Environment Relations	61	9.24	Quality of the education	85	5.19
Indifference of the parents	60	7.59	Indifference of the parents	82	6.75
Inadequacy of the social Activities	52	6.58	Inadequacy of the social Activities	78	6.42

The findings related to the most important characteristics which the elementary school administrators do not like in their schools are as follows:

1.44.16% of the principals and 40.5% of the assistant principals, approximately two-fifth of them, gathered in the first five characteristics within their groups.

2.The school administrators have a similar tendency to determine the things with which they are not pleased in their schools.

The findings indicate that school administrators have consensus on the characteristics with which they are pleased or unpleased in their schools. In the first place, the school climate takes place. This finding reaches us that the school climates at elementary schools in the scope of the study are open. In a way, this result can explain the inadequacy of the quality of education, school-environment relations, cooperation with parents and social activities. It is known that quality of the education is decreasing, social activities are going down and the school-environment relations are problematic. There is another well-known situation that these undesired and problematic characteristics of the schools are a result of practices of administrative staff who favor discipline based on power, authority, hierarchy and close control [5,6,7,8]. At the same time, this finding also reflects the experienced contradictions arising from the school climate created by the administrators by accepting discipline as a value.

3.3.The Internal Obstacles of The Successful Operation of The Schools

The most important three internal obstacles according to the views of the school administrators preventing the successful operation of the schools are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Internal Obstacles of The Successful Operation of The Schools

Principals (N= 158)			Ass. Prin. (N= 243)		
158X3=474			243X3=729		
Internal Obstacles	f	%	Internal Obstacles	f	%
School Climate	85	17.93	School Climate	114	15.64
Physical conditions of The school	83	17.51	Physical conditions of the school	108	14.81
Economics Problems of the staff	74	15.61	Economics Problems of the staff	103	14.13

The findings related to the internal obstacles preventing successful operation of the schools are as follows:

1.51.35 % of the principals and 44.58 % of the assistant principals gathered in the first three obstacles.

2.The administrators perceive the internal obstacles of the operation of the schools similarly.

Findings once more reveal that the school climate is significant enough to become an obstacle for the better operation of the schools. This result is consistent with previously presented findings and reached judgments. It calls attention that poor physical conditions of the schools in metropolitan Ankara appear to be an obstacle for

the successful operaion of the schools. The existence of some problems in organizing the internal and external conditions of the schools in Turkey are known and subjected to debate. The finding shows the inadequacy of applied and theoretical studies in relation to this topic even in the capital city. It is understood that economic conditions of the staff is one of the internal obstacles of the better operation of the schools. The school personnel are the members of the group with a fixed income. From the aspects of working hours in relation to educational services, it is known that they have the opportunities to have extra jobs and it is the case in practice. A decrease can be expected in the motivation and performance of a person who has to find an extra work to meet his basic needs, and as a result of this, his contribution to the operation of the organization is expected to decrease normally.

3.4. The External Obstacles of The Successful Operation of The Schools

The most important three external obstacles for the successful operation of the schools according to elementary school administrators are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The External Obstacles of The Successful Operation of The Schools

Principals (N= 158)			Ass. Prin. (N= 243)		
158X3=474			243X3=729		
External Obstacles	f	%	External Obstacles	f	%
Political Pressure	98	20.68	Political Pressure	114	15.64
Subjective attitudes of the superior Administrators	92	19.41	Subjective attitudes of the superiou Administratorrs	113	15.50
Indifference of Parents	66	13.92	Indifference of Parents	112	15.36

The findings related to the external obstacles for the successful operation of the schools according to elementary school administrators are presented below:

1.54.01% of the principals, more than half, and 46.5 % of the assistant principals, approximately the half, gathered in the first three factors

1. The administrators perceive the external obstacles of the successful operation of the schools similarly.

The political pressures and the subjective attitude of the superior administrators are the first two most important obstacles for the successful operation of the schools. The situation is debated in different arenas with cause-effect relations. It is emphasized in these debates that the reasons for most of the discomfort which the administrators experience or face with is because they can not act free from their political tendencies. It is also claimed that there is a relationship between inadequacy and political subjectivity of the administrators. This situation is assessed as a result of the behaviors of the politicians and the general attitude of the superior educational administrators [9]. The findings of this study support these judgments.

The indifference of the parents can be assessed as the result of the operation and understanding related to school-family cooperation in Educational System of Turkey. In the center of this general understanding and operation there is a thought which perceives the parents only '' a financial resource''.

3.5.How The Elementary School Administrators Describe The Climate of The Schools

The elementary school administrators were asked to describe the climate of their schools with one item. Putting the items into order, the school administrators stated that they described the climate of their schools

'' bureaucratic'' in the first place. This finding looks consistent with the other situations which they share and like. The discipline is liked as a common and most shared value. This value includes authority, power and hierarchy. In such cases, it is natural to describe the climate as bureaucratic. However, the contradiction in this description is a result of the content of the bureaucracy concept described in theoretical dimensions. In reality, the organizations defir.ed as bureaucratic have proficiency, rules for all and objectivity. With this appearance of the bureaucracy, we can claim a pathological operation of the bureaucracy at schools. The school may be bureaucratic in some ways but because of the services that they produce they are expected to be more informal.

3.6. The Characteristics of The Schools in The Ideals of The Elementary School Administrators

The characteristics describing the ideals of the school administrators and taking part in the first five are given in Table 5.

Table 5. The Characteristics of The Schools in The Ideals of The Elementary School Administrators

Principals (N= 158)			Ass. Prin. (N= 243)		
Characteristics 158X5=790	f	%	Characteristics 243X5=1215	f	%
Locally administered	55	6.96	Having the teams of the trained administrative staff	90	7.41
No political pressure	55	6.96	Having open climate	86	7.08
No economic problems	54	6.84	Having contemporary curriculums	86	7.08
Having suitable Physical Conditions	51	6.46	Having good relations with the environment	85	7.00
Having open climate	50	6.33	Serving a quality education	83	6.83

According to the findings related the characteristics of the ideal schools of the primary school administrators, 33.55 % of the school principals and 35.4 % the assistant principals gathered in the first five characteristics. The findings reveal that the administrators define their ideal schools with different characteristics. In the ideals of the principals we see the principals with more authority and independence, school with non-existence of political pressures, having no economic and infra-structural problems and having open climate. The assistant principals imagine the schools with a trained administrative staff, contemporary curriculum, open climate and better relations with the environment and quality.

It can be said that the principals who desire to have more authority have focused on economic and physical problems and climate. However, their assistants see the quality of the education the school climate and the environmental relations more important. The findings show that as an administrative team school administrators' description of their ideal school separately makes the image of the ideal school as a whole.

The ideal school described by the school administrators has the characteristics of popular values of educational administration including open organizational climate, environmental relations, contemporary curriculums and local and adequate administration [10]. The school principals and assistant principals can be accepted as two different groups compensating each other in terms each other in terms of vision development. This can be valued as an opportunity to develop and realize the organizational vision. However, at this point, overcoming the dilemmas created by the traditional values like the discipline is a precondition to make use of such an opportunity.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations of this study can be listed as follows:

1.The common characteristics approved by the school principals and the assistant principals are '' the discipline, the positive aspects of the students, the status of the schools and their economic conditions''. Additionally, they also emphasized some other characteristics different from each other like the ''adequacy of the teachers'' emphasized by the assistant principals.

2.The administrators as a team do not like ''the climate'', ''the quality of the education'', ''the environmental relations'', ''the indifference of the parents'' and '' the lack of the social activities'' in their schools.

3.The administrators as a team stated '' the climate, the physical conditions and the economic problems of the personnel '' as the internal obstacles of the successful operation of schools and ''the political pressure, the subjective attitude of the superior administrators and the difference of the parents as the external obstacles of the successful operation of the schools.

4.The administrators describe the climate of their schools as ''bureaucratic''.

5.There is a school in the ideals of the school principals which is locally governed, has no political pressures, has already solved economic

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problems, and has proper physical conditions. The assistant principals described their ideal school with trained administrative staff, contemporary curriculums, good environmental relations and qualified education. The common characteristic of the ideal schools of the administrators is ''open school climate''.

The following recommendations can be inferred from the results of the study.

For the school administrators to develop vision and realize it,

1.the administrative structure of the elementary schools should be localized more,

2.the school administrators are required to develop skill to cope with the political pressures,

3.their sensitivity should be increased in terms of public relations, and

4.the school administrators should develop consciousness about the qualified education.

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